



SRGC -----

Bulb Log Diary

ISSN 2514-6114

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BULB LOG 09.....17th September 2025



Codonopsis grey-wilsonii



The first flowers on **Codonopsis grey-wilsonii** are a sure sign that we have moved into the autumn season: whether it is scrambling over the ground (above) or twining up a rhodendron (cover) I am captivated by its beauty. These 'later' flowers are a further reminder that it is autumn, on top of the cooler nights and the sun's lower passage across the sky. Among the seasonal tasks in the garden I have finished re-potting the bulbs growing under glass, cut



the hedges, shredded the cuttings, pruned the cloud tree in the front garden and the bulb houses have received their first autumn storm. If you are new to the [Bulb Log](#) check out this week in previous years to see the details and explanations of these tasks. There is an archive of twenty three years of Bulb Logs detailing how I grow bulbs in pots as well as documenting the wider garden and I am wondering how much longer I can go on. With all the other forms of social media there seems to be plenty content out there and there may not be any reason for me to keep writing the Bulb Log beyond the end of this year, unless you think there is still a place for it.

The appearance of **Cyclamen hederifolium** flowers is another harbinger of Autumn and they are poking up everywhere - often pushing their way through the remains of the summer plants that are now in retreat. It is always reassuring to see the autumn flowering bulbs blooming among the decaying foliage that is all that remains of plants who have finished their annual cycle of growth. The autumn flowering bulbs are just starting to flower and more will continue to appear until November brings the frosts.



Thinking about the measures we sometimes take as gardeners to enable special plants to grow, then compare that to where some plants choose to grow themselves, tells me we have so much to learn from nature.

It is testament to the resilience of this pine tree that it has grown in a small concrete container, which I made over forty years ago, and if that is not remarkable enough what about the *Epipactis helleborine* that has appeared for several years flowering in this apparently hostile habitat?

It must have arrived by seed and is obviously in some sort of relationship with the fungi that is associated with the pine tree.



Epipactis helleborine



The small flowers are typically those of an orchid in miniature. To find them you really have to explore around a garden. The only other place I have found this plant in the garden, is under a *Rhododendron dendrocharis*, above right, which has good leaf growth but no flowers this year.

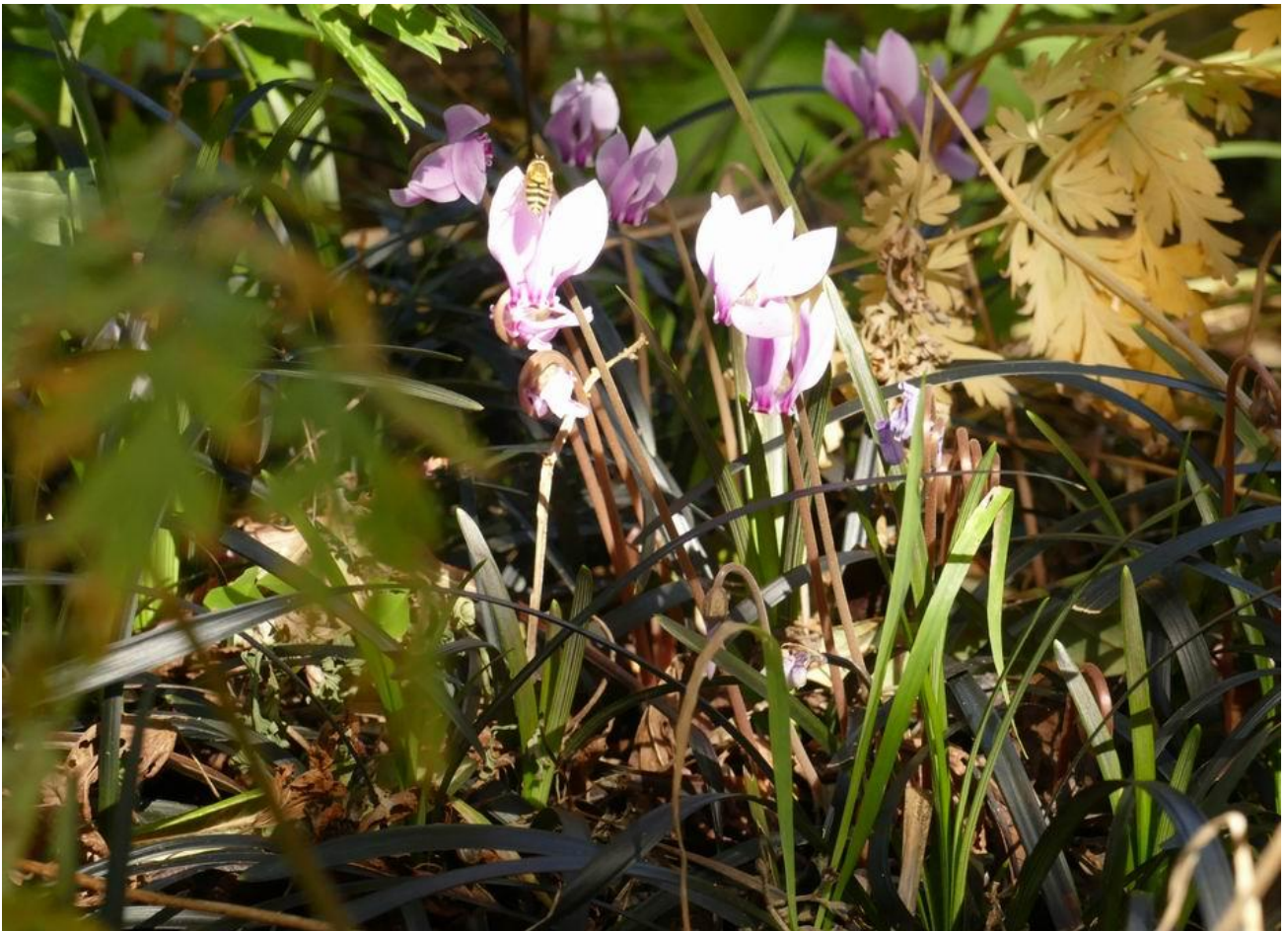


Although it is growing under the rhododendron it is also within close proximity and in reach of the roots of another pine tree with its associated mycorrhizal fungi. Anyone who thinks gardening is boring has the wrong kind of garden.



I also spotted the first few of what I hope will be a mass of **Crocus nudiflorus** flowers. They are triggered I am sure by the lower night-time temperatures. The flowers bloomed even before the relief of the recent rain which soaked and cooled the very dry ground, now I hope that many more will be galvanised into flowering.





The low sun coming through our many trees and shrubs creates brilliant shafts of light casting a fleeting spotlight on the plants such as this clump of **Cyclamen hederifolium**. As you can see from the pollinator (Hoverfly) I am not the only one to be attracted to these flowers.



I had hoped for a few more flowers spikes on this **Eucomis bicolor**— this year.



There were lots of leaves with only a few flower spikes last year and I thought that each rosette of leaves would produce a corm big enough to flower this time round but obviously they will take more time to build up to flowering. As gardeners we often have unreasonable expectations that our plants will flower well every year when in nature that is rarely the case.



The future of plants in any garden relies on seed and here are some nice seeds on **Paeonia woodwardia**. Depending on how mature your garden is you may choose to collect these to sow in pots or perhaps to share through the [SRGC Seed Exchange](#) or if you and your garden is 'mature' (that is a polite way of saying old) like me - I leave them to self-sow or scatter them in other areas.



All across the garden Crocus flowers are appearing through the remains of the early season's growth. These Crocus are nearly all raised from our own garden seed which though the process of natural selection has resulted in a mixed bag of garden hybrids that have adapted to survive and increase in our garden and changing climate.



In our early growing days we would lift and divide the garden growing bulbs to expedite the increase but now we tend to leave them to fend for themselves. There are several *Colchicum* groups that have done well delighting us in their bright pink, often checkered flowers.



The individual flowers of this tessellated pink hybrid *Colchicum* do not last long usually flopping over after a few days but still they bring real joy and beauty to the beds.



***Colchicum* 'Pink Star'** We have grown this one for many years under various names but now it seems to be settled that we should call it 'Pink Star'. Whatever the name it is still a great plant that performs well in our garden.



Many of you will pull **Lapsana communis** out regarding it as a weed but I am happy to have it seeding around. Here it is growing in the Erythronium plunge frame appearing long after the Erythroniums went down. Its masses of small yellow flowers attract a steady stream of pollinators, but it remains a striking structural plant even after the flowers fade especially when the light picks it out against the dark hedge.



The light also draws my attention to the **Allium wallichii** which you could never describe as the showiest of the genus but in the spotlight of the autumn sunshine it is stunning.



Allium wallichii seeds around gradually spreading out from the spot where we originally planted out the first pot of seedlings we raised. Since then, it has seeded around, aided by me scattering seeds, and it now appears in much of the garden. Once again it is one of the less spectacular flowers that has a huge attraction to pollinating insects.



Despite the long warm drought, the **Cyananthus lobatus hybrid** has done very well perhaps the best it has been while its neighbours in this bed, a number of seed raised *Cyananthus microphyllus*, have died out with only a few plants managing to just hang on.



This ***Gentiana asclepiadea*** is also showing the signs of the unusual summer heat and drought we have experienced. Despite



the leaves hanging limp and dehydrated the plant has still managed to produce a lot of flowers.

I do not like to water the garden during the dry periods in fact until the last few years our weather has meant that it was not necessary as we got plenty rain through the year. That has changed over the last few years, and we are experiencing long sunny periods without rain. The reason I prefer not to water is that it makes the plants 'lazy' encouraging their

roots to stay near the surface instead of having to search deeper to find the cool moist soils deeper down. After one of the longest hottest periods on record we got a good night of rain, and the plant immediately perked up.



Relived and rehydrated by the rain the flowers and foliage have perked up and are turgid once more.



Veratrum fimbriatum is endemic to California where it grows in the northern coastal scrub, so it has evolved to cope with dry periods. It is one of the very first of the herbaceous plants to emerge and the very attractive fan shaped leaves do most of their growing in the early part of the year when there is usually plenty moisture available then as we head into autumn the equally impressive flower spikes emerge. In what we used to consider our normal conditions there would still be plenty moisture to keep the leaves nice and green but this year their leaves were already yellowing when the flowers spikes extended.



Veratrum fimbriatum



Bulbs have evolved their own way to cope with dry conditions by storing moisture and nutrients in their bulb, corm or tuber which in many cases will support the flowering, such as these Crocus hybrids, while the roots and leaves will delay their growth until moisture is present.



I cannot resist another view taken a few days after the previous image showing how more Crocus hybrid flowers appear.



Cyclamen hederifolium is another of the staple autumn flowering bulbous plants that after it is planted will grow and seed coming back bigger and better every year. They are also drought tolerant because their leaves will only grow when the moisture returns - some years, if it is moist, the flowers and the leaves can appear together.



Cyclamen hederifolium



Cyclamen hederifolium



Cyclamen hederifolium



The earliest of the **Crocus banaticus** flowers are also appearing, I am hoping for many more in the next weeks.

Colchicum × agrippinum produces tight clusters of bulbs you will get more every year but as the competition increases, they bulbs get smaller and smaller and stop flowering so it is one that I do try to lift and divide every few years.



Colchicum davisii is another clump former but seems to keep on flowering longer despite the increased competition among the bulbs. The flowers of this species must be especially tasty to slugs and snails because they get eaten more than any of the other species we grow.

Even though they are well chewed the **Colchicum davisii** flowers still attract a regular stream of Hoverflies.

As I have matured, I have become more tolerant of the creatures that share our garden. Chewing on the plants is a small price to pay to witness the increased biodiversity we have created in this city garden that is a haven for the gardeners and wildlife.



I have often shown pictures of all the songbirds that visit our bird feeders which we keep well stocked all year round. The healthy population of songbirds regularly attracts **Sparrowhawks** to hunt for a meal. With the density of trees and shrubs providing cover in the garden it is not the easiest hunting ground and their attacks are mostly unsuccessful, but we often find the remains of a kill. This time the prey was one of the pesky town pigeons and I managed to get a few pictures of this beautiful predator plus a [Short Video on YouTube](#).

Please do let me know your thoughts on the future of the Bulb Log - has it now served its purpose? All the Logs will of course remain available through the [index page](#) do you think there is a value in my continuing to add to it?